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THE PURCHASE BY BLOOD:

A Tribute

TO

BRIG.-GEN. CHARLES RUSSELL LOWELL, JR.

SPOKEN IN THE WEST CHURCH,

OCT. 30, 1864.

BY C. A. BARTOL.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1864.

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SUNDAY, Oct. 30, 1864.

Rev. Dr. BARTOL.

DEAR SIR, — The undersigned, members of the Standing Committee of the WEST-BOSTON SOCIETY, would respectfully request of you a copy of the Sermon delivered by you to-day, commemorative of the late General LOWELL, for the purpose of publishing the same.

Truly your friends,

ALEX. WADSWORTH.
E. LOMBARDY.
F. U. TRACY.
THOMAS GAFFIELD.
A. E. JOHONNOT.
FRANCIS E. FAXON
H. H. COOLIDGE.

TRIBUTE.

Psalm lxxii. 14: "PRECIOUS SHALL THEIR BLOOD BE IN HIS SIGHT."

THAT is to say, the blood has in it a certain price or power to purchase. Any thing in the world is worth what you can buy with it; and blood is incomparable treasure, by this rule. So I claim to-day the blood nowhere more copious or pure than has marked your lintels and these church-doors. It were impertinent for us to live on, and not recognize its rate. It is a universal law. Blood, shed in testimony to any truth or principle, is the chief riches of mankind. It is not money, or what we commonly mean by value, — a commodity named in books of political economy, like coin or coupon, exchange or merchandise, harvest, work of art, piece of mechanical labor or skill; yet the wealth of it, as demonstrated in what it obtains and is bartered for, mounts beyond bullion or bank-bill, any growth of the field, monument of skill, best note of hand, or royal promise to pay.

There are times when nothing else will pass; but on this alone as a specie basis all beside depends.

It is so with us now. By revenue and tax, by mining and tillage, we hope to cancel our liabilities. But these were worthless, and all the property any miser hugs lost, or the plunderer's prey, without this better and primary opulence of consecrated and self-sacrificing blood. Let us consider how far this sort of riches goes, or what it will buy in that market which has other treasures than of food and clothing, office or ornament, exposed for sale by the universal owner and lord of the creation.

First, while it appears to be the losing, it is really the saving and purchase, of our life. Men in peril, astray in deserts, or drowning in wrecks, offer all they have for their life. Is it extravagant to say, that this nation, staggering under blows of assassination, plunged and struggling in the whirlpool of secession, is buying existence with the blood of its sons? The chief priests bought the potter's-field with Judas's cast-away silver, saying, "It is the price of blood,"—a disgrace, good for nothing else; but what was the blood itself, bought with thirty pieces,—the Hebrew sum for a slave,—but the price of the salvation of mankind! We are to-day buying our laws and liberties, else sold at auction to the highest and basest tyrant bidder, with this same currency of blood. Nothing else will be taken. As debtors are sometimes told, "We do not want your paper; though first-class, it is not a legal tender for the case in hand: we demand gold;" so blood is required of us. Many mourn over the expense to which we are put. They

are inclined to say of our enterprise, "It costs more than it comes to;" and ready to give up the contest. Years ago, we were advised, "Your zeal is fine; but, when the dead and wounded begin to come home, and the crippled to limp, or get with crutches round the streets, the feeling will change." The dead and disabled by thousands have come home. But the feeling has not changed, and cannot change, so long as an instinct informs the people that their very heart is aimed at, or until the nation can consent to die rather than atone for the sins which can have no remission without the shedding of blood. It is the blood of our best. But better eat seed-corn than starve! Better be half-slain in self-defence than slain altogether and outright. Besides, in our progress, so manifest, though by such slow degrees, towards redemption, how fairly the Almighty Dealer we have to do with shows that he reckons every instalment on obligations of the past we have to pay! If he holds out his hand for more of this ruddy liquidation, our creditor is kind, as he is just; for the advantages that accrue in his providence outweigh all our waste and loss. It chills and inflames me to hear it atheistically spoken of as sheer waste and loss by men who do not seem to imagine we have any account open with God; and are so deaf to the voice of human annals, and so void of faith in human nature, as to think that from patriotic battle for order and right nothing of lasting import inures.

Will you talk of the loss of means, the monstrous

swelling debt? But you do not ask yonder merely what a merchant owes, but what his assets are. The question is, not of our debt in dollars and cents, the depletion of purse or population, but with what estate of soul and body we can pay the draft. The blood of courageous devotion shall buy off all the dead corpses and millions of gold. Coin it into drachmas, and how much will it make? Solve the sum in your financial arithmetic, and tell in figures what one drop of it is worth. It is going to afford us a new lease of life, as a community. For that, let us lavish it as individuals, holding the Roman maxims, *To see that the republic receive no harm*, and *To despair of the republic is a crime*. It is no rhetorical touch on your sensibility, but authentic statement, that the returns already are immense in our very being. No race was ever bankrupt, in which the blood of freedom and honor flowed, and which was willing to let it flow out in part to save the honor and freedom of the whole.

What do we contract for with this blood? I said, for our life; I add, for our Union: and how much is that worth? Some years ago, one or another party—opposite ones—undertook to calculate the value of it; but their ciphering was laughed to scorn. Yet the Union, which can stand only in order and impartial freedom, was almost gone. Like men that get up something sunk out of sight in the sea, we, with our lines of battle, are drawing it back from the roaring gulf of anarchy. Let us not grudge the

cost! Through all time, men have paid great prices for surrender of person or territory from bondage. Our turn has come to offer in blood terms of ransom from captivity. Northern blood and Southern blood are put into the same measure of the Most High, with whom we are in treaty, whether, despite our corruption, we deserve to continue longer on the earth. Both are "blood of the covenant" with which our reunion is sealed. Not an unregarded particle of it, secretly away from human eyes soaking into the ground, shall escape his notice and exact allowance. The vessel he holds for it is a graduated cup, and we shall be released the moment the just mark in it is reached. The rising of the tide by a hair's breadth at last floats the mightiest frigate; and we need not fear infinite equity will throw away aught of the circulation, whose ebb from our bosoms makes the flood, in its sight, to move that ship, aground, which we call the vessel of state. We are bought with a price. Our debt is funded in this capital of noble blood. We cannot repudiate the debt, because we cannot repudiate the blood!

How, do you ask, shall our outlay be made good? I know not that I can tell. The processes of life in a man cannot be traced to the bottom, nor the manner in which nations rise by that fall of their sons which is their own ascension too. But the fact is undoubted. This nation has already so risen, as from nothing, once. It fought and strove its way at first to birth among the powers and governments of the globe.

In its infancy did it find itself in the attempt to extinguish it. It came to consciousness when assailed and borne down by arbitrary power. From the swoon of oppression it awoke by being bled. It lay like a child close to Bunker Hill, and many a spot beside of sacrifice; and it was nursed wonderfully from the vital expenditure, every stain of which had disappeared. But Bunker Hill itself almost sinks before the grandeur of present struggles for designs of transcendent consequence. The civilization of the world is always fed from scenes of human renunciation and pain, as its devotion has been sustained from Gethsemane and Calvary. It is a mystery, but it is the truth. God knows why this American community, long sick with its own transgressions, fainting under the strokes of internal foes, gets the new nurture it cannot do without only from the red baptism of this Aceldama. He knows why blood so much is the price and purchase of that sanctity which alone can insure our longevity.

When we think of the victims of the war, the lambs without number taken out of our vast flock and fold for a vicarious sacrifice, we lament. But when we think of the temper in which they have gone to it, and the contagion of virtue to scatter our corruption they spread, what is grand and immortal in us exults over the bier, though holding our own. See the young man in the flower of his days, surrounded by all that can stir or fill earthly desire! He has kindred dear to him as his own soul, and is the blossom

on a generous stock. A fine position he holds for reputation, influence, and gain. He is conscious of abilities to ascend in any calling of peaceful life to the topmost rank of his fellow-men. He loves, and is loved: the sweetest mixture ever commended to mortal taste touches his lips. His abounding strength lifts the horoscope of score on score of years of enjoyment, equal to what our humanity can ever have in its lot. But he surrenders it all; he lays it on his country's shrine; he carries it into the path of the bullet, and puts it at the hazard of any ruffian's aim. Wherefore is it? Because, though he has all heart could desire for himself and the house he was born in, it is not enough, if the house of the nation is broken into; because he owns his parentage in the common Father, and the mother-land that bore him, and because they, through whom he came, see the childhood of God and duty beyond that to themselves in their son; because, if wedded, he knows he was honor's husband before, and because the wife girds and gives him to that supreme prior choice, and by her delicate but resolute fingers the badges of his fatal vocation are wrought; because he feels he belongs to this awful fortune, as part of the price of redemption for justice and native land; and that part of the price which he is he will not, like the perjured promisers in Scripture, keep back. He confesses he is not his own; there was a hold of pre-emption on him before he could dispose of himself any way: a heavy mortgage, covering all he is worth, includes body and soul.

He waits not, therefore, for the conscription, or assertion of its right by the law. He volunteers, — and 'tis this volunteering has saved us! — not pretending he is making any gift, or has independent property in his own endowment or nature to bestow. Truly we say he is *possessed* with a divine impulse for a providential end. Nor does he believe that life or death hangs for him on the dice of chance, but the bidding of God. He understands well there is no want of economy in adventuring what he has or hopes into utter jeopardy. Be it what it may, intellect, manhood, love, or holy purpose, he is sure it shall all be counted for the attaining of his purpose by his Maker and mankind. In that certainty he is satisfied; and, calm as you under your roof, he walks in all the fury of the strife.

Such is the blood we may call *precious*, because it is the *price* with which things invaluable and indispensable are procured. We hear of those, beset by enemies or encountering robbers, resolved to sell their lives as dear as possible. Our princely boys, our lovely Jonathans, without thought of personal escape or self-protection, have sold their lives as dearly as possible for the general safety. Let us not deplore them! Let us envy them the way of their death! We shall probably die — comparatively mean privilege! — in our beds, of some disease that flesh is heir to. Their flesh is consumed on the altar. They have taken off its robe suddenly, at the bridegroom's coming, to put on the wedding garment. It has dropped

from them in the blaze of battle, like Elijah's in the chariot of fire. They leave it behind, a mute and mangled but resistless testimony of their cause. The bounding blood of the hero is noble. More noble the refluent blood of the martyr. When both mingle in one man, how fast they fill up the price of the commonwealth!

Shall we question the price of blood, when we reflect how much that purchase means? What equivalent do we foresee, but posterity, nourished on what it procures; industry, in the next generation, instead of the blight of luxury and mildew of self-indulgence in our youth; freedom, a pioneer sturdy as ever smote the woods of the Western wilderness, advancing to redeem the soil, so long by our wretched serfdom defrauded of its fertility; immigration, hardly intimidated by the shock of arms, coursing more abundantly in the channels of peace; literature, already springing to bud and bloom, for splendid and native flourishing, out of furrows ploughed into the sub-soil of character by the cannon-wheel; art, with subjects many and large as she can wish to treat furnished to her hand; eloquence and song, dropping artifice to become the voice of nature; out of ignorance and barbarism in our borders, education starting for the *reconstruction* of which politicians debate; religion, reviving out of a sorrow so impartial and wide-spread as to cement all sects into Christian unity; a grander statesmanship, begotten of a sincerer faith; our political edifice restored, like finer buildings on the spot of a conflagration!

gration: and all this purchased with the blood whose effusion our streaming eyes and bleeding hearts — as nature in us contends with spirit — accompany and bewail? Thanks to those, at home or abroad, who favor such a consummation!

One has lately fallen in battle of whose renown we claim a share for the church wherein he had his birth, in whose Sunday school he was taught, and of whose almost peerless pastor, he, after his own father, was namesake. Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., commissioned Brigadier-General before he expired, was born in Boston, January 2, 1835, and was mortally wounded, October 19, dying the next day, in the thirtieth year of his age. He had of talent a heritage fourfold, and was of a lineage, on either side, distinguished in the foremost places of business, inventive enterprise, and every useful profession, or gracing domestic retirement with the softer glories of womanly accomplishment. In his own achievements he but continued the line of ancient fame, — his great-grandfather Lowell having, from a righteous and instinctive foresight, so worded the Preamble to our Bill of Rights as to make slavery for ever void in Massachusetts. To the fourth generation, he maintained the spirit of his progenitors; and his opposition to this Rebellion was not will so much as obedience to an original law of his own nature. But his military ability was one form only of his overflowing power. He had devoted himself to mechani-

cal improvement, both from an innate tendency, and a wish to better the condition of the workmen. It shows his quality, that, after being the first scholar in the Latin School, and graduating at Cambridge with the highest honors, he entered the factory-works at the bottom, — doing the stints of the youngest boy, clearing old iron chains, and bringing water. Philanthropically exercising his finer gifts at Chicopee, he had regular classes of the younger laborers, to whom he gave scientific lectures. He could have been a merchant, but that he disliked bargaining. It became early evident, as it was manifest in all his course, that his genius, limited to no calling, verily like the mechanic's universal joint, could turn any and every way, though his signal force and rapid rise in rank in the army would imply, to such as knew him slightly, that he was made only for a soldier. But a soldier of the first order he became. Hearing, at the Mount-Savage Iron-Works in Maryland, which he superintended, of the attack by the mob on the Massachusetts Sixth, April 19, 1861, he could not bear it, but hastened at once to Baltimore, without any knowledge or consultation of friends. He stopped there the fearful Sunday that followed, and made his way, we knew not how, on foot or otherwise, as he could, through raging dangers, with his carpet-bag, to Washington: offered his services; was accepted, and at once commenced to labor, — first as an agent in the charge of military stores; though, as soon as the opportunity came, he entered on the more hazardous

career he preferred, and in which he persevered, saying, "As Southern gentlemen enlist, so should the Northern." He modestly, at first, asked to be lieutenant; but the military authorities, declaring he deserved higher rank, offered him a captaincy. He never put himself forward, but was inevitably advanced by his wonderful, and almost unparalleled, energy. Reticent about whatever he compassed, incapable of boasting, he could not even bear to be praised. He kept steadily in camp, hardly ever seen by his parents, always at his post, doing his duty. So with equal success it would have been anywhere, and in any sphere. Such was his promptness and infallible execution, that, if his superior wanted to have any thing done quickly and surely, it became a byword in the army, that Lowell was to be summoned,—the man to lead a forlorn hope. His quelling, like Cromwell, of a mutiny in Boston, that began in his absence, as in his presence it hardly could, killing the ring-leader, who was on the point of killing a subordinate officer; his abashing into instant submission of a rebel, who had raised a pistol against him, with a "Down with that!" and down it went; his cutting down another who had stretched out his hand to seize the color,—all show the impassioned resolution, deliberate will, wise daring, and cool fire of a heart and brain that went always together, although an exceeding tenderness equalled and ennobled his habit of command. Whatever he was sent for, as by a kind of fate, came to pass. He was never late,

never wrong, never circumvented ; but his efficiency became a proverb to those above him or below ; so that the brave Sheridan, who, in recent disaster, by a miracle of real presence, retrieved the fortunes of the day, — the most brilliant feat yet in our land-service, — when he heard of the death of one of temper so kindred with his own, might well exclaim, “ Good God ! Lowell gone ? Many of us might have been better spared.” In a self-exposure, never thoughtless or foolhardy, but on purpose, and ever to the point, twelve horses had been shot under him, a shell had passed through the blanket at his saddle, his clothing been riddled all over with shot, and he had gone through a thousand marvellous escapes, before he rode the thirteenth horse, which was repeatedly wounded in the last charge, — while he, untouched by any deadly missile, seemed to bear a charmed life.

A little after noon, on the 19th, a spent minnie-ball passed through the sleeve of his coat, and struck the breast at the upper part, without breaking the skin, burying itself as it could, eased by his under-vest, in the flesh. It collapsed the lungs, and took away his breath, with a dint that would have been mortal at last ; but he, quietly like himself, put in his fingers, took it out, threw it away, and refused to retire, though he was soon helpless, for two hours, from the blow, which would have discouraged most men. He said, “ It is only my poor lung : I cannot leave the field ; I have not lost a drop of blood yet.”

His poor lung was weakened by occasion of severe disease and hemorrhage some years before. At about half-past three, a second minie-bullet crashed through his right shoulder, severing the spinal column on its spiteful way, and stopping just at the surface of the shoulder on the other side. Even his bravery could not pretend to be able to stay and fight longer. He sank, incompetent for the action that had been his congenial element from his birth to that moment. His battles were over; but not, in his judgment, his official duties. In the shelter to which he was borne he issued his orders, giving directions so precise, when his voice allowed, all through the night of the 19th, that those under him, who so sadly missed their leader, might not miss his leadership after he was gone, — ducal soul, alive or breathing his last, as he was! He wished by these instructions to settle, through his staff, all business connected with his command. Not the minutest thing, says his highly valued and warmly attached aide, Lieutenant Alvord, was forgotten. He would save his staff trouble, and prevent any mistake or error after his decease. These particulars were taken down in writing at the time, he speaking and resting at intervals, knowing death was near, and might hinder him, and so concentrating his thoughts into the fewest words, as the surgeon advised the least possible speech. Because of his wounds, he was able himself to write but two short lines to his wife, who had been to him, in their short earthly companionship, helpmeet indeed. All the rest was by dictation.

How he taught the lesson of despatch, and of composure as well!

God granted him to depart in victory over the foe, and greater victory over death, on a date made trebly memorable by the battle of Yorktown, the surrender of Burgoyne, and triumph of Cedar Creek. It was beautiful that the faculties, which had been so sun-like and lucid for his work, should remain clear, without a cloud to the last. It was merciful that the body, which had been so pitted against peril and mortal pain, should be let down through the degrees of exhaustion, and become lifeless without a pang. Had he survived, I know not what eminence of career awaited such harmonious composition and matchless combination of head and heart and hand. A friend of his, in high command, writes, "Lowell has made a great reputation, and is booked for a star; he is considered the best fighting man for a brigade here." But, like our chief on the field, he was taciturn about his own doings. He hated writing; he almost hated speech. He was not one to use either to profess his feelings: hardly would he to express them. Sentimental talk was never to his taste. I remember, in the camp near Washington, his bending his sword, to show me, in the language of action, what poor stuff it was made of.

"Stood for itself his deed."

So it was to the last. He confined himself to the essential. He cared for those whom he had led, sent brief good-by, and commended to God the soul that

doubtless hovered over his earthly home on its way to heaven. What opened before him here below looked so great as to make his decease seem untimely; but what he performed was so perfect, his task appears finished, without defect or fault.

I saw him several times within the last year; once, to congratulate him on the fidelity with which he had taken a mutinous life, when he would rather have given his own; to my approval, a silent glow of grateful pleasure in his ingenuous face being the only reply, while I stood admiring, meanwhile, the strange refinement into which meditation and experience had carried the child's full rosy cheeks, in which from the outset lurked such manly beauty, like the statue hid in the block. On the morning of the 20th of this October, at eight o'clock, his spirit flew; for it did not take that spirit long to get out of the body! Was it not to the embrace of other spirits that it flew, especially of three,—the own brother, James Jackson Lowell; the dear cousin, William Lowell Putnam; and his other brother, Colonel Robert Shaw, buried with his colored soldier-boys at Fort Wagner, who had preceded him out of the same deadly lists into what some poet calls "the silent land," though it is vocal enough within itself: and how musical with joy, when parted friends, in mutual recognition, meet and greet again! But, while they proceed, undying, above, "precious" on earth in what it purchases for us "is their blood in His sight." Parents, doubly honored, we style you not afflicted, but blessed, who have made

such a contribution to the common weal! Can we forget *your* parents, in their partly posthumous gifts to the cause of all that is sacred among men, of the three grandchildren who have ascended to their welcome benediction of salute? Shall we fail to remember that the blood, our blood, in these or other veins, still circulating or flowing to the ground, is, of all we want in our utmost need, the saving price?

But listen a little longer for me to say it is the price, not only of liberty and law, and our name to be a people on this planet, but the purchase, too, of our faith in the everlasting state. Such dying as it is our privilege to live in an age to behold, is it not the prophecy of interminable life? Nay, it is the display of a life of intrinsic imperishableness, to which we can set no bound. It compels infidelity to belief. Doubter of human immortality, I call up my witnesses to put your scepticism to shame! I summon those youthful forms from their slumber in the ground into the visionary court of our mind to testify. Rather, I bid you hearken to the whisper of their living spirits, glorified, yet shining with the former look and expression exalted. I cite the action and example of our brother, last vanishing, for demonstration of a continued being. Has the lamp gone out of that intelligence of his, so eager to communicate itself, that the troops could not halt but he would have his officers at headquarters for lessons? for, from a book of which there was but one copy, — “Thiers’s History of the Consulate and Empire,” — he read aloud to his staff, teaching them,

not from the volume itself, but giving his own views from some passage as a text. Has that courage been cowed to the phantom of death, which bore him, with a constant three-years' bid for the bullet, along the blazing edge in the Peninsula or the Shenandoah Valley, where no horse could be safe with him, though Providence spared his life till he had completed his mission? Shall the sublime trust of such an offered head not be justified? Had that leaden messenger, which I saw in his father's hand, bruised and scooped in crushing along his bones, the privilege to let into nonentity the soul it could not daunt? Is premature and irreparable extinction the burden of our dirge and funeral-march over his dust? Could the traitorous muzzle, raised, not only against him, but against all that makes life desirable on this continent, be permitted to blast to annihilation the will and principle that withstood inhumanity? Believers in God, followers of Christ, friends of man, not so with him, or those in the same cause going after or gone before him! Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, partners and lovers, here present or far away, into and out of whose veins the same rich ancestral stream of blood has flowed, in life and in death, think not that any of it, — a particle, — is lost in the sands of distant battle-fields, "like water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up." It is not only the price of our political duration, and the security of our civil honesty, that had begun so to quake among the nations, but proof that the spark of reason and love

it was animated by, through all cold obstruction of the clod, flames on in shape more fit to convey its own lustre. Ye to whom it was dear, and whose own it was, contemplate its essence eliminated and translated! Survey the offspring of your several family branches, so connected by nature and affection on earth, now in the communion of eternal progress and bliss, not only “in *death* not divided,” but in living society of rapture we cannot conceive. So let us regard our brother! The Second Massachusetts cavalry was not the last or best company he shall lead in the land of peace. Cedar Creek was not the final spot of his experience. Sublime dying persuades of eternal living. While the spiritual likeness abides a photograph in men’s minds, the reality shall not cease.

I have spoken of the price of blood, — what it will and does buy in the sight of God. But he asks, and mother-land asks, yet more. Have we it to give? Yes; though sixty-five of our number have gone to various departments of the war already. Every religious body, every Christian church, like our own, will answer, Yes; more blood, if more for our great purchase be required! Yes; for this blood, running in us or running out from us, what is it good for but to vindicate God’s righteousness in his children’s weal?





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